

2-23-2006

Nonlinear digital storytelling through multiple perspectives.

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Rochester Institute of Technology

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
in candidacy for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts

Nonlinear digital storytelling through multiple perspectives.
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Feb 23, 2006

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Abstract

There lies a big distinction between gaming and films in terms of interactivity, however the gap is being bridged with experimental pieces. The advances have been made on the gaming side with stories being incorporated into games through the usage of video clips. The web, due to its vastness of interactivity, has also begun to use video in experimental ways.

My thesis will apply the interactive principles of gaming to digital video to create a unique user experience, where the users choose various perspectives to investigate through the film. The user will have to watch most of the perspectives to understand the story. With research into DVD authoring, I also intend to have the DVD randomly making choices to create a linear format of the movie. This ensures that the user sees the same movie but through different perspectives and paths every time they watch the movie.

When someone buys a DVD they tend to watch it several times. If there are a variety of options for viewing provided for them, they will spend more time with the DVD and get a different experience of the story upon every watch. This makes the entertainment value of the product higher thus increasing its marketing potential.

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INTRODUCTION

The choose your own adventure films are a perfect fit for a generation of people that are blessed with a short attention span, a fundamental belief in self-reliance, and an unbending desire to control their lives.

The initial objective of this project was to create a film based on user interaction. The decisions the viewers make help shape the story. To develop this concept further, I wanted the software that controls the interactivity to randomly generate a path by making decisions as if it were the viewer, creating a different instance of the movie every time it is viewed.

The process required me to research into filmmaking to understand the principles of direction, cinematography, scriptwriting, visual effect supervision and production. Along the five month journey there were many obstacles that had to be overcome, resulting in a unique experimental film with great entertainment and marketing potential. The troubles of dealing with cast and crew, the delays in the production schedule and lack of resources helped mold the project to give it a life of its own.

This stressful and exhilarating experience resulted in a choose your own adventure film which puts the viewers in the drivers seat as they navigate through various environment and determine the actions the characters in the movie will make.

LITERATURE REVIEW

During the research and development of the project there were a few valuable resources that facilitated my filmmaking process. Courses, books and movies provided me with the skills and inspiration that I required to complete the interactive film. The courses that I took at the University of Southern California during my research period were also helpful in this process. My professors shared a wealth of knowledge with me. They made me aware of how scriptwriting, editing cinematography and directing effects the entire film and how to break each part of the process down and analyze it. Their lectures and critiques opened my eyes to the various aspects of filmmaking and introduced me to the filmmaking terminology so that I may dive through the research literature with ease.

Building onto the knowledge the professors shared with me, there were three books that I constantly kept referring to through out the span of the project. The first being, In the Blink of an Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing by Walter Murch. In this book there are many practical nuggets of wisdom, like why he starts the editing process by laying out a series of representative stills from the movie and how he places little cutout figures at the bottom of his computer screen to help create the illusion that he is editing for a big screen. This process was useful to me to get a flow of the story and where the edits should be placed.

A quote that caught my attention in his book is as follows.

"There are places in a conversation where it seems we almost physically cannot blink or turn our heads (since we are still receiving important information), and there are other places where we must blink or turn away in order to make better sense of what we have received. And I would suggest that there are similar points in every scene where the cut cannot or must occur, and for the same reasons." (Murch)

This was meaningful since people tend to over edit their scenes. This quote reminded me that every edit should have a purpose, or the user gets taken out of the viewing experience. Each chapter looked at such questions as how to choose what material to keep and what to discard.

"Emotion...is the thing that you should preserve at all costs."
(Murch)

The second deceptively simple book that was a big help to me was Setting up your Shots by Jeremy Vineyard. Through this read I was taught that the language of cinema is the language of camera shots. The perspective, the composition and the technique all count towards getting an audience to feel the emotions being portrayed by the actors. But how do you know where to put the camera?

This book answers that question of how to know where to put the camera. It fills a much-needed gap for the beginner filmmaker and makes an excellent reference tool for those who are experienced. Vineyard explains that it is not just a question of where to put the camera but how to know where to put the camera to get the shot that will tell the story in that one frame.

The definitions of camera shots are precise. Vineyard also tells you how it's done and what effect it has on the viewer. As a way of clarification, he also places you in the position of the camera, allowing you to see the shot from the camera's point-of-view. Finally Vineyard tells you where you can see such a shot in action, the film or films in which he has seen it used. This turned out to be a valuable resource and one that was most often referenced during the continuation of this project.

The final reading material that assisted me was Story by Robert McKee. Believe it or not, this was one of the most difficult reads I have encountered since it spans over 400 pages of dense, technical prose spread out in 19 chapters, an introduction and an epilogue. It's also one of the best books on the craft of writing that's ever been written.

McKee's discussions of research and creative choices remind us of the importance of knowing what you're talking about and making conscious choices in your writing. I found the discussion of act design, with its information on plots and subplots, very interesting, and it moved smoothly into scene design, where I learned about turning points and setups/payoffs.

I also learned that characters are not to be confused as human beings, McKee reminds us, and then sets about showing us not only why they're not like human beings, but how to use that to our advantage, building well-rounded characters not just for the main parts of the story but for our secondary characters as well; Leaving the tertiary characters deliberately flat. Following his layout I was able to chart personalities for my characters, which helped create a captivating script.

Along with the reading material, movies were a big influence on this project. The films that provided me with inspiration for my concept were a lot of film noir and neo noir pieces. I carefully watched *Hannibal*, *Taxi Driver*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Requiem for a Dream* for inspiration. There was something unique in each movie that stood out to me. I incorporated pieces of all of these films into my story. I wanted to have the shock factor of *Hannibal* but use the lighting scheme of *Oliver Twist*. I wanted my characters to be dark like in *Taxi Driver* and the editing to be like *Requiem for a Dream*.

Adding onto the knowledge provided to me by my USC professors, the books, and the movies I read was the assistance of my advisors at RIT who were a key part in the completion of the project.

PROCESS

The idea that I wanted to work on was a "Clue game" where the user enters a situation and has to solve a mystery by navigating through the perspectives of all the characters involved. Each perspective has limited information and the user has to navigate through all the perspectives to understand the situation and solve the puzzle. In doing so, I wanted to reflect how each individual's perspective is different in real life. We each have our own unique way of viewing the world. Hence I wanted to show the state of the mind the characters were in by controlling the speed of the video and audio, the colors they see, the focus and camera movement. If a person were agitated in the situation then his view of the world would be shaky, making the camera movement sudden and jarring. The sounds would be high pitched and the images they see would be in high contrast. If a person was relaxed then things would be slowed down and a dull color palette would be used. There would also be smooth camera movement. This meant that I would have to film the entire project in a green screen environment and add the backgrounds in postproduction to achieve the desired effect. I also wanted each perspective to be through the eyes of the character. To accomplish this I would have to film multiple times though each perspective and maintain the consistencies in the script and actor positioning. The user would then be able to switch perspectives at any point and not lose their flow in the story.

Research:

Once my topic was selected and finalized by the thesis committee, the next step involved gathering the knowledge that would be necessary to begin the production of the project. I decided to take three film related courses at USC that would give me the backbone that I needed to get things moving. The courses I registered for were: Beginning Filmmaking, Digital Editing with AVID, and Commercial Production.

The beginning filmmaking course was chosen since I had very minimal experience working with digital video. It would act as a prerequisite to the other more advanced courses I wished to pursue. This was an intensive 6-week course, covering every aspect of filmmaking, requiring me to complete 5 short films. The bulk of the knowledge that was utilized for my thesis came from this course.

The course taught me to conceptualize an idea, create a script, develop storyboards, set up the lighting, film the scene, capture and edit the footage, and produce the film. In doing so we were taught the fundamentals of filmmaking used in international cinema along with the classic three act Hollywood structure. It was in this class that I realized that my film was going to be a neo-noir piece since my third project was a horror music video, which got a great response during the end of the quarter film showings.

Beginning Filmmaking:

- Week 1: Editing seminars in AVID Express Pro HD/DV.
How to use the camcorder.
Where to check out equipment.
Equipment safety.
- Week 2: Lighting lectures: 3-point lighting system.
Lighting exercises
Editing seminars continuation.
- Week 3: Script breakdown
How to calculate beats within a script and what makes a good script
- Week 4: Working with cast and crew.
Getting performance from actors.
- Week 5: Story and structure design.
- Week 6: Production and budgeting.
How to make it in the film business.

Digital Editing:

This course focused on learning how to edit on the AVID DV/HD Adrenaline machine. Every week we had to edit footage that was given to us and analyze our classmates' projects. This helped me to analyze the various editing techniques used by students and professionals in the industry. It opened me up the endless possibilities that lie in editing a single scene. Individuals brought a unique creativity to their projects, which I was fortunate to have experienced.

- Week 1: Fundamentals of editing on the AVID Adrenaline HD
- Week 2: "The Visitor" scene edits and critique.
- Week 3: "ER" scene edits and critique.
- Week 4: "Gladiator" scene edits and critique.
- Week 5: "Wings" scene edits and critique: Learnt to use a multi-cam setup as used on sitcoms.

Commercial production:

The course had the same structure as beginning filmmaking but it was tailored towards commercials. Since the previous two courses were filmmaking intensive there wasn't much to learn from this course. It did provide me the opportunity to apply my filmmaking skills in an advertising environment, which meant efficient storytelling in a 30 second time span. It also gave me the opportunity to meet with various cinematographers, directors and producers in the industry.

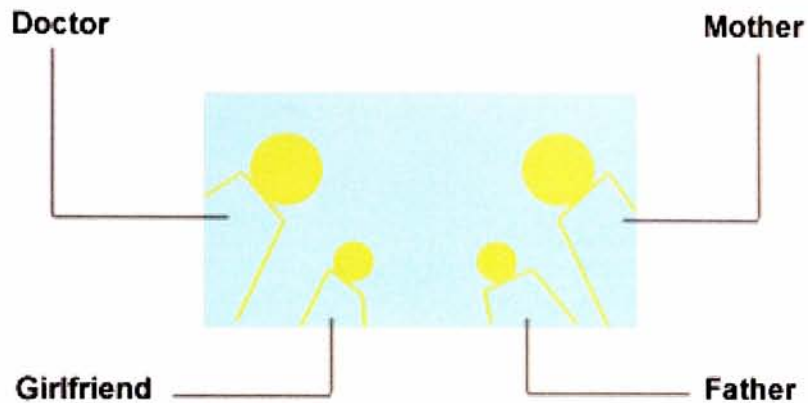
- Week 1: class intro and project briefing. View successful commercials.
- Week 2: lighting lecture (Repeat of info)
- Week 3: editing lecture. (Repeat of info) First commercial due.
- Week 4: working with actors.
- Week 5: Second commercial due.

Development:

Once I returned from the summer courses at USC I met with my chief advisor to determine the direction the project would take. I would not be able to find a green screen environment where I could complete my planned vision, so the direction of the project had to be modified. The idea then went from a "clue game" to a "choose your own adventure film". The concept of navigating through multiple perspectives would be the same however the viewer would see each character's perspective as a mini story. The viewers would choose a character and navigate through the entire story as that character. Each character had a different set of actions. The idea then became more game like. You choose your character and your adventure. The reason we decided to do this was because of lack of production time and facilities (no green screen room and multi-cam setup). Once the change had been approved by my advisors I had to choose a structure that was flexible enough to support this idea and create a captivating story.

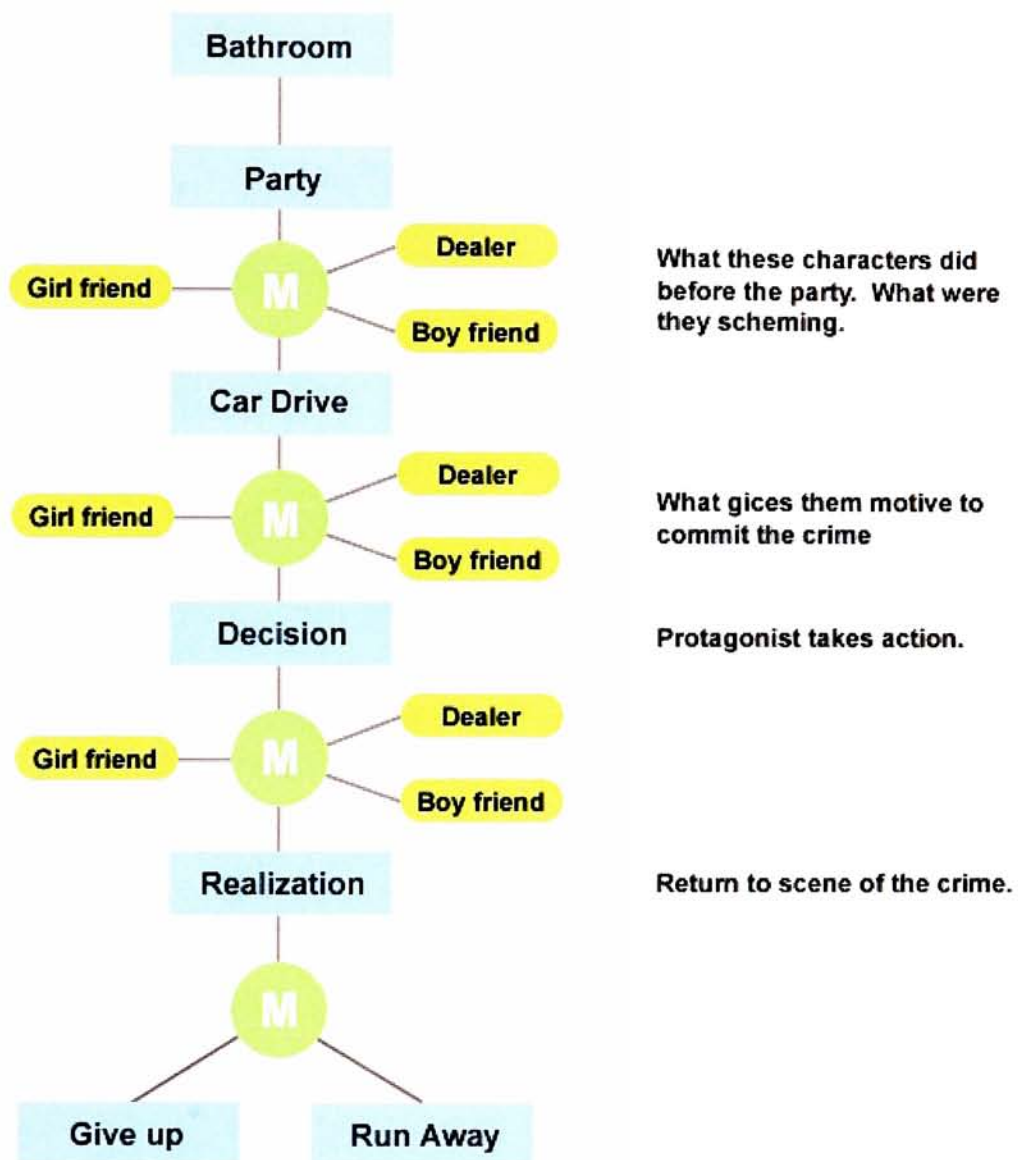
The way I visualized the first concept was in the form of one traumatic scene that brought together all the main characters. I chose a hospital environment where a patient is being dragged into an operating theatre. Surrounding him are doctors, family members and friends. The scene begins through the eyes of the patient looking up at those faces in panic as the pale bright lights on the ceiling of a narrow long hallway shine down on him. The viewers would then be able to choose a character and learn how that character contributed to the patient's situation. Once the user has finished viewing that mini story they are then taken back to the hallway scene where they choose another character. All the perspectives have to be viewed in order to understand the whole story.

Diagram 1 (hospital branching)



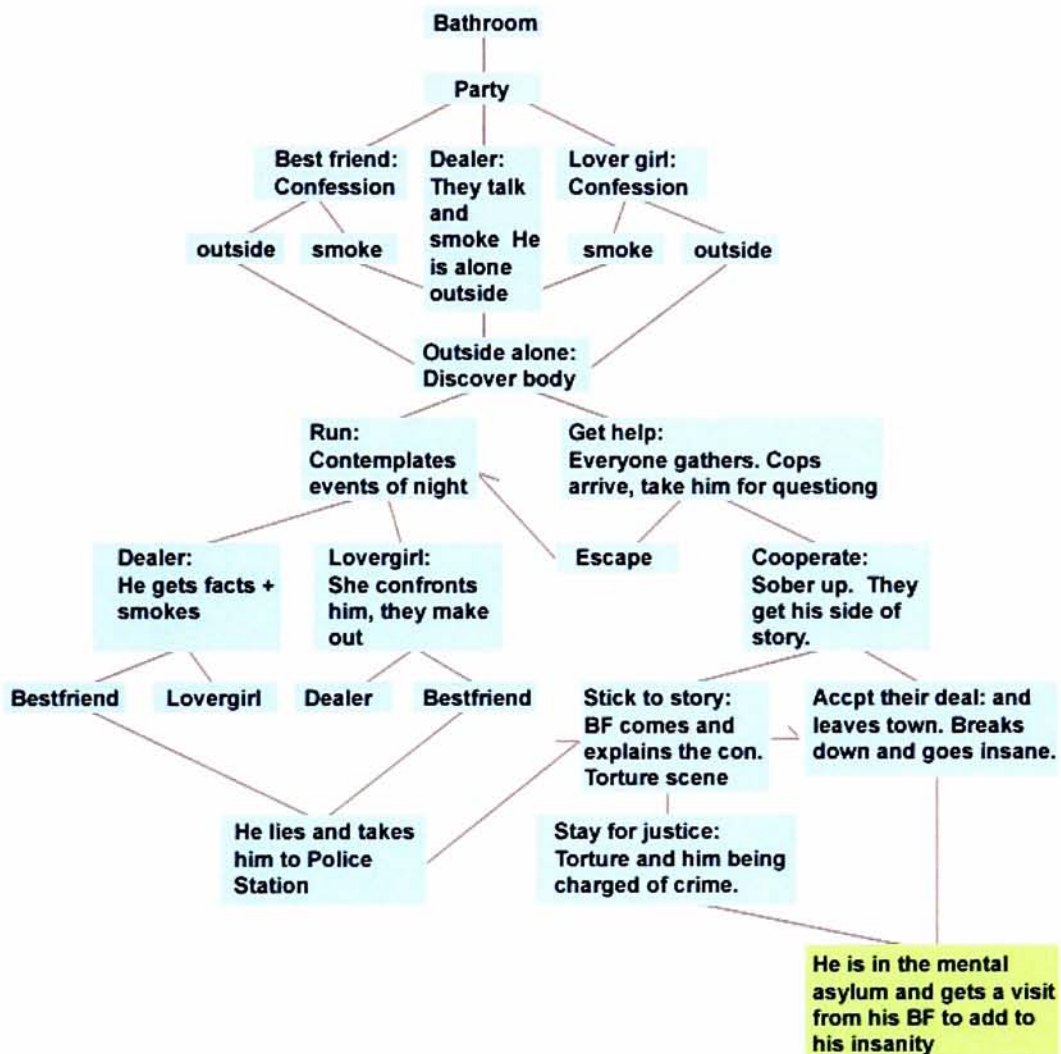
This idea seemed to be high on production value since I would have to get hospital equipment and costumes. I had to choose a less expensive project and one that would incorporate more interactivity. The structure needed to be expanded, therefore I took the idea as represented in diagram 1 and added a few more traumatic incidents on top of each other to create a new structure as shown in diagram 2. There would be one intense scene and then the user would navigate through all the characters perspectives. The story would then continue to another intense scene where the user again has a set of perspectives to navigate through. This solved the interactivity and production problem I encountered. This time around I calculated the resources (cast, crew and props) I had and based my story around those limitations.

Diagram 2 (structure 2)



Building upon this structure I created a script and set up a meeting with my chief advisor for feedback. The script was a neo noir piece since I was deeply fascinated with this genre and had some experience creating this mood and style in previous projects at USC. (Script in appendix) After reviewing the idea we realized that the structure didn't seem to work. It would be unclear to the user what was expected of them when they would return to the same intense scene after viewing the characters perspectives. They would not know that they have to click on the other characters and view all the perspective in order to move along in the story. This would cause frustration to the end user, resulting in an unsuccessful project. Therefore, we decided to sit down together and chart out the structure based on the decisions that each character would make in every scene. This got us thinking more in terms of the actions that were to take place instead of the scenes. This approach simplified the entire process and together we worked out a new structure as on the following page.

Diagram 3 (structure 3)



This structure starts narrow and widens up during the body of the story. It then becomes narrow again and all the choices end at one scene. I wanted to try this since I would be able to have control over the direction the film would take. The story begins and ends as the director wishes but the user determines how they reach that goal. This concept fascinated me since there was freedom of choice from the users side and control from the directors side. Once this was agreed upon a new, revised script was developed within a few days. I was then ready to organize the production. I had to create storyboards, set a budget, cast actors, choose locations, find props and costumes.

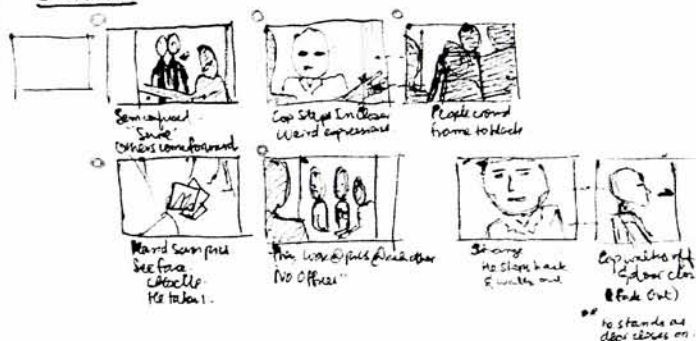
The storyboards I created were very basic but strong enough to convey the mood and actions in the shots. The hectic filming schedule in the beginning filmmaking class I had taken at USC prepared me enough to work with rough storyboards and to improvise shots on set. With this experience I was confident this method of working would not be problematic.

The rough storyboards are as follows:

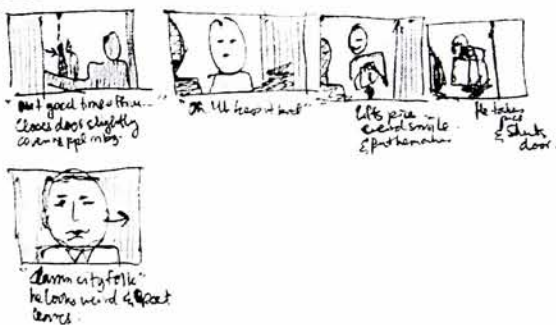
Scene 1:



Scene 2a:



Scene 2b:



MEN U: ~~Stop Play~~ Run



Everything Ok.



No.



He pushes her off.



Wakes

Camera Zooms.



He tries to turn back.



She grabs camera & pulls him down.

[WAKE]

MEN U: ~~Stop Play~~ Play



She notices him for a bit
when they get caught up in moment
then →



Her hands grab him.



Her dragging body to close.



she shuts door.



- She puts body in closet
- Body Shakes down.

[WAKE]

Sam: Scene 4c



Close up of broken construction
house.



He Awakens



He crouches on
the cot.



He looks up
Spots a window.



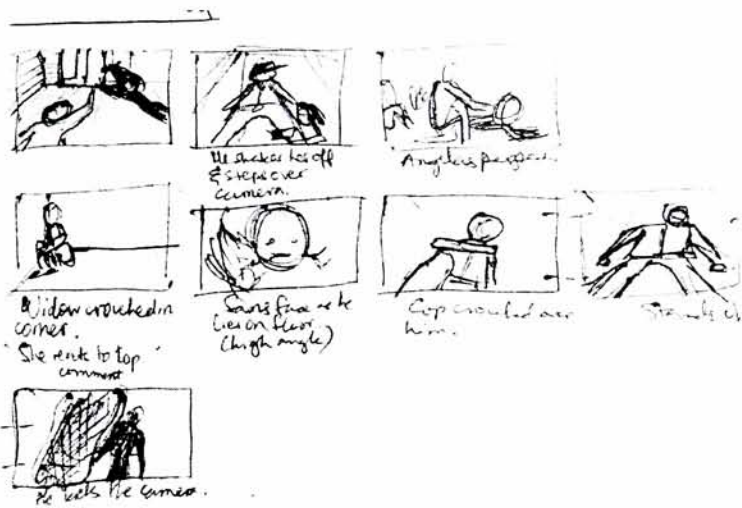
Sees the lit windows.

Call Cops:



Scene 5c: Look for Angela:



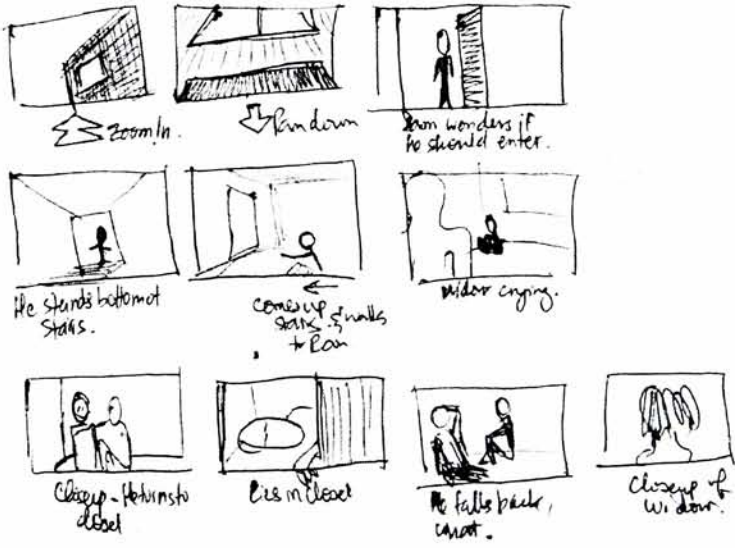


{END}

Memo: Wait.



Scene 5b: Look for Iris



MENU: Play



room on Widow
face.



She pushes Sam
down, & on top of
Sam.



Pushing on them
from Hall
Angela walking in her perspective.



Through them:
'Sam, wait the fuck'
He pushed her off.



She falls back &
hisses
- Camera gets up
& begins to run.



both run out.



Run down stairs.

MENU: Run Out.



NO



Image of Sam



The Widow
Says:
Hold Me



He runs to camera.



He runs to camera.



Runs down
into camera.



On the Angels.
They eat left.



Widow walks down

Angela comes with lantern.

MENU Run to the Street: *



Run out.



Widow watches me
they run
and they the set.

Based on these rough storyboards the scenes were filmed. Below are storyboards of the actual footage along with a brief description of the flow of the story.

The cop enters and warns residents about a girl gone missing. The residents sleep on that thought and get caught in a spell, awakening in various locations of the witches lair.



The user has the option of choosing the three characters involved. If they choose Iris, they fall victim to the widow witches wrath. Leaving them with the perspectives of Sam and Angela.



Sam calls the cops and ventures out in search of Iris, only to discover his friend, lying dead and the witch beside him. Escaping her grasps he runs into his girlfriend Angela where they are picked up by the cop that delivered the initial photos.



END of version 1 of the story.

If the user chooses the perspective of Angela, they wake up in a corpse filled bathroom. She is joined by Sam and they investigate the lair for Iris. They are spotted by the widow as they sift through her belongings. The sneaky witch knocks them out where they awaken moments later to find the same Cop that delivered the message standing over them. Their plead for help only to realize the officer has other plans for them.



END of version 2 of the story

I wanted to keep the production as minimal as possible in cost since I was unable to get funding for the project. I set an estimated budget of \$500 which was coming out of my pocket. This would encompass lighting and camera equipment rental, transportation cost and food for the talent.

I began my search for actors within the Rochester community by posting flyers and advertising on the Internet. This did not seem to work efficiently so I started approaching people who I felt would be appropriate. Once again, this was not successful. The only other option I had was to contact

friends who were interested and available. I got a much better response this time around and was able to fill all the spots.

Once my actors were cast, I began scouting for locations. This was a time consuming but after a week of searching I was able to find environments that were appropriate to the story. The next concern in location scouting was getting permits. If I had informed the authorities I was going to be filming there would be a greater chance of our set being shut down and it would take a long time to get that authorization. This was time that I did not have; hence I decided not to get permits.

For costumes, I asked the actors what garments they could provide and we chose something out of their wardrobes. The only costume that would have to be purchased would be the cop costume. I also asked the actors to bring the props that we needed such as the toy guns, wigs, and turntables for the party scene.

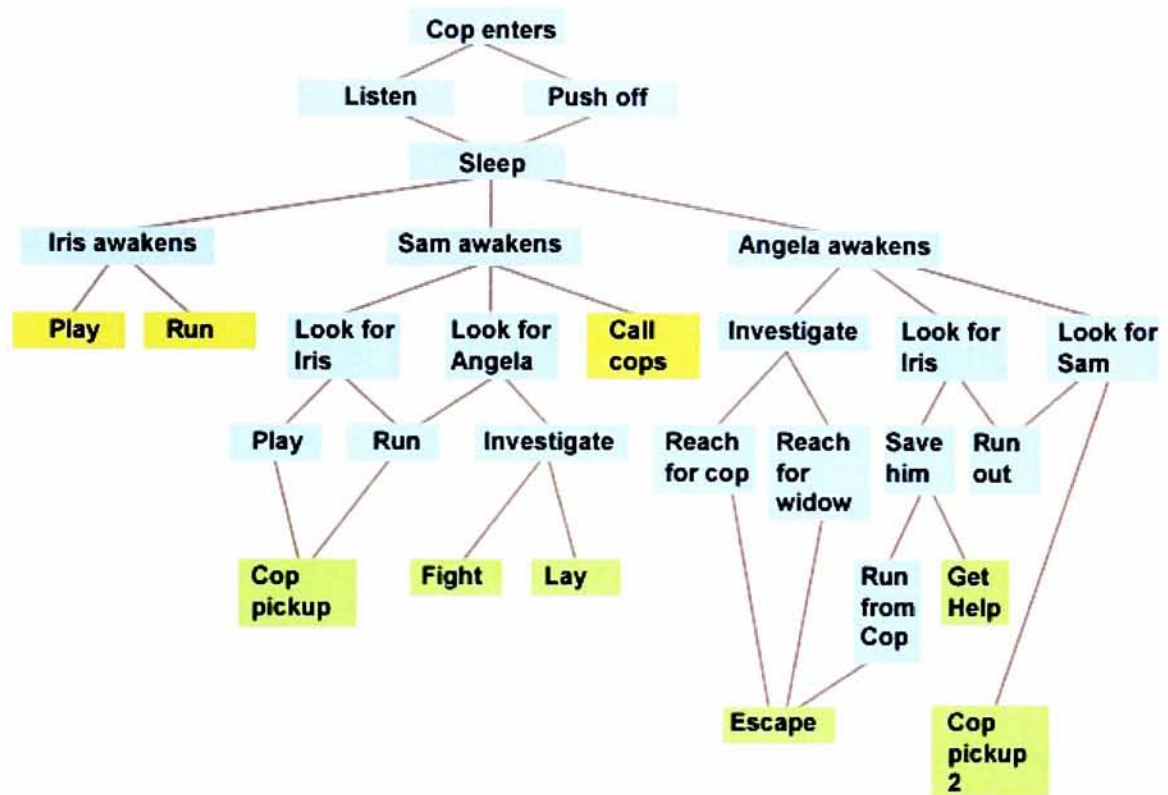
It was possible for me to use the lighting kits provided by the department so this saved me money as well. The lighting kits however had a problem with overheating the set and they consumed too much power, which would often blow the fuse. I had no choice but to take my chances.

The camera equipment that I wanted to use was priced too highly for my production so I decided to use the Sony HSC-DV camera provided by the department. This meant that my night footage would end up extremely pixilated but I had no choice. With this in mind, I decided to create a distinct style to the film, which would accommodate for the lack of light and graininess.

Once all these technicalities were settled I sent the script to the actors, and we were ready to begin production within a few days.

The initial plan was to film the party scene first however due to travel and weather reasons majority of the talent was unable to make it. We rescheduled the shoot for a later date but my lead actor dropped out of the production due to personal reasons. To accommodate for this the script was altered and the crowded scenes were deleted. Unfortunately due to similar circumstances my lead actress and script supervisor dropped out. This meant that I was lacking talent and the person who was to look over the script consistencies while we filmed. This would make my task even more difficult. These are the drawbacks of working with a large cast. This required an entirely new script, when we had to start filming in a few days. I had to scrap the script and go back to the drawing board. Not only did that mean a new script but an entirely new structure. However, it had to be done since we were already behind schedule by two weeks. I had no time to inform the advisors about the changes since any discussion would postpone the filming schedule and I was not willing to accept any more delays. By limiting myself to five actors I tailored a script in two days. The finalized structure is shown in diagram 4.

Diagram 4.



With a few sleepless nights everything was back on track and the new structure, script and storyboards were finalized. This was rushed over to my actors and they only had one night to review it. Knowing it was going to be impossible for them to memorize lines and rehearse with each other, I told them to get comfortable with the character more than the lines. This meant that the entire script would have to be improvised. I was weary of working this way since there would be inconsistencies in dialogs, which would cause problems during editing. I expressed this concern to my actors and directed them to keep the dialog as consistent as they could. Directing close friends would be a real test of my directing skills since I would have to provide them with more background and feedback than I would have had to if I were working with real actors.

(Script provided in Appendix)

As the actors reviewed the script I scouted more locations. I was able to find the perfect abandoned townhouse community that matched the tone of the movie. The problem was that there was no electricity on set. This meant that we could not use the lighting kits and needed to get battery-operated lights. I went to Wal-Mart and purchased the cheapest flashlights I could find to light the set and acquired the cop costume. It was time to start filming.

The actors arrived on schedule and one of the actors was able to get a hold of a Canon XL1 camcorder, which I was exhilarated to use. For once it seemed things were going smoothly. We all drove down to the set and set up the lights only to realize the lights were not bright enough. This meant that the abandoned house scenes could not be done that day and we had to work on other scenes. Stressed and upset we returned to my house and decided that we would film the scenes, which didn't require lighting equipment. This meant we would film the scenes where the cop enters to warn the residents and the scene where the residents discuss the cops visit. All

these scenes would be lit with practical lighting. The actors didn't seem to mind since it meant they would have a little longer to memorize the lines. After a short night of filming I was satisfied with the results I got.

FOOTAGE example 1: scenes indoor with practical lighting.



The next day I replaced my flashlights with more powerful spotlights so that we could film in the abandoned townhouses. The actors arrived an hour late. This cut into the filming schedule. They were briefed on the scenes we would be filming and we rushed down to the location, set up the lights, and began filming. I had no crew so I made the cast handle the lights when they were not in the shot. This worked out well, since it kept everyone on set quiet, occupied and entertained. It was a tedious task to direct the actors, maintain the lighting, maintain the script consistencies and film the story.

During the shoot some of the actors kept losing sight that we were filming an interactive game. We would re-shoot scenes with variations since the end user is meant to determine the actions of the actors. To them it seemed as if we were re-shooting the same scene. I had to repeatedly inform them it's a game and to go with flow. A lot of time was spent explaining this concept to them. Regardless of these delays I was satisfied with the shots that we had for the day.

FOOTAGE example 2: filming with Sony and Canon camcorder.



With two days worth of footage at hand I was ready to begin capturing and logging my footage. This was not an easy task since the Canon XL-1 was set on a PAL setting which I was unable to adjust since the camera owner did not want me to change the settings. This meant that I needed the same PAL camcorder to import the footage. I then had to find a time the Canon camcorder owner was free in order to acquire the media. The backup Sony camcorder, which was used in some of the handheld shots in fear of wrecking the Canon, was using the NTSC standard, which I desired. There was no problem importing this footage since I was well aware of its settings. It took me some time to understand the problem with the PAL system since I was unaware of the settings on the Canon. Adding onto this, I was unable to capture the varied footage into the AVID project file. I-movies was then used as a common ground to turn my footage to a QuickTime

Format, which was later imported into AVID. Finally the media was captured and ready to be edited.

We still had two more days of filming in order to complete the production cycle. The following weekend was the third filming date. On this day, we had no Canon XL1 camcorder and had to film entirely on the Sony camcorder. I knew this would be problematic since filming with the Sony camcorder night vision created grainy duotone footage. This had to be matched with the high resolution Canon XL-1 footage. My intention was to use the Canon consistently throughout the shoot however due to its unavailability I had to switch cameras to maintain the filming schedule. The different cameras required different intensities of light to maintain the consistency in the footage. The Canon required more light than the Sony. Regardless, I had no choice but to accept the footage I had and make it work. An example of the grainy footage follows.

FOOTAGE example 3: Sony camcorder footage



The police shut down the set on the last day as we were filming and we were unable to conclude some of the shots. Since I had chosen to work without permits I knew that if we got busted we would have to leave the premises; not to mention the penalties of trespassing. However the police official was understanding of our situation and we were asked to leave. To our good fortune this happened on the last day when most of the filming had been completed. Some of the story's endings were narrowed down even further to account for the missing footage. We complied immediately and didn't push our luck. What an exhilarating experience! It was a good thing that I had organized the shoot in such a way that we filmed the scenes in order of importance.

With the production part of the project behind us, I was anxious to begin post-production. With the remainder of the footage captured and logged the editing was well on its way. The editing took a good week. Once the footage was placed in the timeline and all thirty scenes edited, I had to worry about the color correction. Due to the varied amount of light the different cameras required, we ended up with inconsistent footage. This meant extra time in postproduction.

Color theory was also applied to the footage at this point. I wanted to express the levels of danger the characters were facing with color theory. In order to accomplish this I chose to stick to the three most standard colors that are recognized worldwide. I used the color conventions on a traffic light. Green was used when the characters were not in danger. As the tension built up the footage was yellow, and when there was danger involved, the shots were red. This could have been done on set with gels and filters but I knew color correction in postproduction was possible, saving us time and money during the production process. It could have also been done in software packages such as Shake or Combustion, however AVID provided sufficient control to match the footage. This was time consuming and tedious but produced satisfying results.

The next step was the sound design. I got a hold of all the sound effects I would be using and purchased a horror soundtrack from the Internet. This task required great patience since I had to stitch together loops and lay the sound down in a seamless manner. Audio glitches take the viewers out of the story more than the visual ones so I had to spend extra time on these details. I

wanted to add a voiceover track to the opening and closing scene of the story to provide context and closure to the viewers. This seemed like a fairly simple task, but ended up being more complicated than expected.

My actors delivered a convincing performance during the shoot however this wasn't the case when it came to the voiceover. This was partially my fault since I should have provided them with an adequate setting which reflected the mood they were in while we were on set. They were also watching the footage on a small screen as we recorded the voice over. Perhaps I should have taken them to an isolated classroom with a projector to recreate the mood, however due to time constraints and their availability this was not possible. The end result was a weak voiceover with no emotional value. Due to these complications I had to remove the voice over from the script. This takes away from some of the substance of the movie but I felt an ambiguous feel was more appropriate for the tone of this film than a cheesy one.

With that completed I was left with only one week for authoring. I then started to learn the DVD Lab Pro software (a PC based authoring software) but soon realized that it was unable to handle the complicated navigation structures that I required and didn't import QuickTime files. I then began to explore DVD studio Pro and realized that I was facing similar difficulties. With the presentation date a matter of days away I had to create a backup linear version, so that I would have something to show. My chief advisor and I had an emergency meeting to discuss what we were going to do. We then broke the project down into three sections to ensure its successful completion and presentation.

1. (Random Movie) The initial objective of this thesis was to have the DVD generate a story randomly by pre selecting the paths based on the options at hand to create multiple versions of one story.
2. (Play game) An interactive experience where the user navigates through the DVD movie in a game like manner.
3. (Play Movie) Or the user chooses to view a linear format of the story.

It was not possible to complete the first objective due to time constraints. If I had more time on my hands I could have imported the footage to Macromedia Director and coded the interactivity I desired. The other two options still seemed possible within the time frame. With the advisors approval I completed the linear version for the presentation and then began working on the "play game" version.

With one day to spare the interactive version finally came together, but not without another set of complications. There was ridiculous amounts of time spend rendering and transferring media, since the computers hard drive was erased daily by the administrator. I would have to spend two hours transferring media onto the computer and the same amount of time to backup my media at the end of the day. I found this to be extremely inconvenient but I had to comply with the universities policies. This could have been avoided if I had a designated machine to work on for the span of my thesis. The machine that had the DV deck and DVD authoring software was a G3, which increased the rendering time substantially as well.

Despite of all the obstacles I faced on this project the end result was astonishing and a successful demonstration of the concept.

User testing feedback:

Test 1: linear version

Initially I was planning on having the test subjects watch the movie and fill out a questionnaire. However due to time constraints this was not possible. Hence I made the users watch the linear format of the film to see if they were able to comprehend the story, as I documented their reactions.

Majority of the users were able to understand the film and were entertained with it. They seemed to be scared at the spooky moments and seemed well engrossed in the story. They loved the compositions and seemed to have no trouble with the grainy footage. They also appreciated the sound design and mentioned that it complimented the mood and feel of the film.

A few of the students with more video experience liked the way it started off but felt the story did not pick up the pace. The editing could have been more chaotic and quicker as the story got crazier. I absolutely agree with them on that point. However, the story was created to be viewed in sections. In the interactive format the story, editing and pace of the film is much stronger. The consistency in pace is required so that each time the user makes a decision there is a slight buildup to the climax of that scene.

Test 2: Interactive format

I got a consistent response when testing the interactive format. People liked the flow of the story much better and felt the emotions I wanted them to feel as the film progressed. They were thoroughly entertained with the interactivity and series of choices. The pace of the film, which seemed mildly stagnant previously, no longer seemed to be a hindrance. People appreciated the look and feel of the menus. The only criticism I received was that the image in each of the menu should be changed to indicate the different perspectives the user enters. This was extremely helpful since this simple suggestion enhances the feel of the interactive film.

Limitations:

Time:

Due to time constraints I was unable to create a feature film, therefore a teaser version was created to demonstrate the potential of the concept. I had initially wanted to put in subtitles for the hard of hearing so that they too could be engaged with this idea. Unfortunately I did not get into the finalizing details.

The menus were not as elaborate and graphically appealing as I would have liked, since the bulk of the time went on filming and only one week was left for authoring. I was interesting in getting the functionality perfect before attending to the glamour of the project. It is my intention to enhance these menus in the future for my own portfolio purposes.

Script:

I had to write and open ended script making the story stronger as a game than in a linear format. Due to the choices that the user makes as they are in the perspective of the actors, an open-ended structure was necessary. This hinders the vision of the director since there is no definite path to follow and the end user is the one that finally decides the outcome, however there were degrees of control I could implement. I could make the options lean towards a certain outcome. For instance: In order for the adventure to begin through the isolated environment, it was crucial for Iris to die. Hence all the choices that the user makes when they are in his perspective, lead to his demise. This provides motivation for the user to investigate his death through the other characters perspectives. Providing the end user with subtle motivation such as this can help enforce the creative vision of the director.

Perspectives:

When I took on this project, my advisors and I had discussed that we would like to demonstrate this concept with the use of five perspectives. This would almost double the filming time, which made the scope of the project unmanageable within the timeframe. Hence we decided that three perspectives were the bare minimum we could use to efficiently demonstrate the concept.

Initially I wanted to film each perspective through the eyes of the actor. This way you are in the actors shoes at all times. I decided against this because I wanted there to be variations in the footage. Cutting between the same points of view would be jarring to the viewer and it would be difficult to do the scene in one take from start to finish.

User testing:

I would have liked for there to be a diverse test population, but I was limited to computer graphic designers. It was more convenient and time efficient to get feedback from people who were working in the labs. In future projects of this nature I intend to spend more time on critiques and user feedback. This is essential to the growth and development of a project. The feedback I got was extremely helpful from this test audience. If there had been more test subjects, I would have acquired a vaster range of feedback. User comments can never hurt the development of the project; only enhance the outcome.

Technical: specifications

Camcorders:

Sony DCR-HC32
Canon XL1

Operating Systems:

Windows XP Media Edition
OS X

Software Packages:

AVID DV Express Pro HD
Adobe Photoshop
QuickTime
I-Movies
Cakewalk
Power mp3-wma converter
DVD Studio Pro 4

Budget:

Ozark Trail outdoor equipment Flashlights	\$ 4.50 x 3
Ozark Trail outdoor equipment Focusing Lamp	\$ 10.99 x 3
Super Bright bulb	
Adjustable stand/ hanger with hanger hooks	
Soft stable base	
Batteries AAA	\$ 4.00 x 6
Glow sticks	\$ 1.50 x 3
Food for actors and crew	\$ 250
Fuel	\$ 20
SUV rental	\$ 75
Soundtrack	\$ 20
TOTAL	\$ 439.97

As the budget above suggests; the bulk of the expenditure went in feeding the talent. Since I could not pay the actors I provided them with meals. This gave them the incentive to work towards something. This is generally the way things are done on low budget shoots. If I had know the minimum light requirements on the camera before we began production, the money for the flashlights could have been saved. This expenditure is minimal however and the total expenditure fell in my budget range of five hundred dollars.

CONCLUSION

In retrospect, through all the research, development, obstacles and limitations there has been a lot of growth that has taken place in myself and in the project. We have simultaneously evolved taking on a new life.

The research stages of this project were saturated with knowledge in a field that was completely new to me. By spending the summer experimenting with cinematography, scriptwriting, editing and directing I was able to comfortable enough to apply my filmmaking skills to the thesis project. This ease came from creating a short film every week, studying movies, reading books, and taking courses, for two months.

During the development stages there were a variety of complications I encountered that helped shape the project in a new direction. Initially the topic of the thesis had to be changed from a "clue game" to a "choose your adventure" interactive piece due to the lack of resources. Following that was the difficulty of determining a flexible structure to make the project as interactive as possible. After several attempts and the combination of a few creative heads this task was achieved and the script was written. Then came the task of getting the equipment, casting actors and finding an appropriate schedule to film. This was the most difficult aspect of the project since these were factors beyond my control. I had old camcorders and insufficient light kits, which put my cinematography skills to the test. Actors slowly started dropping out leaving me with only a few friends to work with. The lack of cast meant recreating an entirely new story and cutting down a lot of the substance from the previous script. With only days left to begin the production process an entirely new script and structure was devised. The new script was not as powerful as the old one but there was no choice in the matter and the project had to go on. A complicated few weekend of dealing with more cast and crew problems ended with enough footage to create the project. Not to mention the set was shut down by the cops at one point.

The postproduction was the most invigorating aspect of this production from my side since I had to take all the footage and create a captivating and eye catching film within two weeks. I also had to get user-testing feedback during the process to make the film interesting to the audience. The editing and sound design went smoothly since there were no external factors influencing this matter however complications arose during the DVD authoring period. With one week left I had to learn the software and make the film interactive. The task was unnecessarily difficult since the network administrators daily cleaned the authoring station. This meant hours wasted transferring media. This was quite a challenge but the end results were successful. A completed "choose your own adventure" film was ready for viewing.

My advice to all those attempting a project similar in nature are to surround themselves with creative people that make their work exciting. They should manage their time wisely and account for the unexpected in their schedules. Plan a project within their resources, and have designated computers where all their work will be done. Time is the most valuable resource and every moment used in developing their projects will result in a better final product.

All these obstacles and complications only helped me grow as a filmmaker, forcing me to come up with creative solutions to achieve the desired results I wanted. This also made me realize the stresses of working on a tight schedule and dealing with external factors beyond my control. As much as I wanted to shut down the set several times I was compelled to create the vision in my head since there is great future in this concept. Ultimately my desire to create and persevere along with the support of my advisors drove the project to completion. This hard work resulted in a great response during the film screening leading me to proudly call myself a "director."

FUTURE OF TECHNOLOGY

There is an overload of the same music videos and movies being played on television causing the viewer to get bored with the repetition. If there are variations of the video from different perspectives and camera angles then the viewer will be more captivated. They will be able to make the associations between the videos and categorize them as pieces of one large puzzle. This is mentally stimulating to the viewer and engages their attention. Which in turn increases the entertainment value of the movie

This principle could be applied to music videos, short films viewed on DVD and the web, and advertising. Filmmakers can create a television show and create upcoming episodes based on user ratings and reviews online. This also get the viewers actively involved and stimulated, making their experience a memorable one.

The developments in handheld multimedia devices such as the video I-pod and PSP have opened doors to newer and more innovative ways of entertaining ourselves. People once entertained themselves with the "choose your own adventure" books and now they will do the same in a movie format. With gamers and filmmakers in a frenzy over this creative technology, designers needs to find newer and bolder ways of reaching this target audience.

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APPENDIX:

Definition of terms:

1. Storyboarding

A storyboard is an expression of everything that will be contained in the program -- what menu screens will look like, what pictures (still and moving) will be seen when and for how long, what audio and text will accompany the images. It helps catalyze feelings about the feasibility of the idea. If the storyboard looks wrong, the idea will too. The storyboard helps focus on the total content of the program, both from the point of view of the overall size of the program, and in discussing user interaction times. Problems may be spotted from the storyboard, which may prove more costly to correct at a later stage. A detailed storyboard can save time in writing project documentation, e.g., in the production of the product specification document. Advanced planning can result in templates for the content-writer to work with. This speeds up the content-writing process and makes the production of the storyboard itself so much faster.

2. Scriptwriting

Most computer games these days have some kind of narrative to hold them together. What's the point in blasting away all those aliens if you never end up saving the universe? Why bother running and jumping through all those rat-infested tombs if all you get are a few points? Story can provide the motivation for all the various actions you perform in a game, even if the story is sometimes thin or implausible.

Writing for graphic adventure stories is different again. Text games naturally have only text with which to express themselves; graphic games have graphics, too. In fact, most graphic adventures have very little text. They still offer some opportunity for a writer to show off, though, even if most gamers won't really notice. Most graphic adventures need dialogue for their characters, and dialogue is one of the most challenging kinds of text to write. When it's done poorly, people will notice and when it's done well, people won't notice it all (but at least they won't call it crappy). The structure of a good story is basically the same, too, whether it's a novel or a graphic game with many possible endings. In the creation of the story lies a place for a good writer to get to work.

3. Lighting

A *KEY LIGHT* is the primary lighting source, usually positioned off-center and angled to produce a shadow. It establishes the direction from which your light is coming. If the light is too harsh, use a diffuser.

With the key light, you may still have shadows and contrast; this is where the *FILL LIGHT* comes into play. This is supplementary lighting that is positioned midway between the camera and the subject to lighten or eliminate shadows and reduce contrast.

The third light - *BACK LIGHT* - is lighting that comes from behind the subject. It creates a sense of depth by separating the subject from the background area and adds highlights.

4. Direction

A film director orchestrates the artistic and dramatic aspects of a film. The role typically includes:

- Defining the overall artistic vision of the film.
- Controlling the content and flow of the film's plot.
- Directing the performances of actors, both mechanically by putting them in certain positions (i.e. blocking), and dramatically by eliciting the required range of emotions.
- Organizing and selecting the locations in which the film will be shot.
- Managing technical details such as the positioning of cameras, the use of lighting, and the timing and content of the film's soundtrack.
- Any other activity that defines or realizes the artistic vision the director has for the film.

5. Production

A film producer oversees the making of movies. The producer initiates, coordinates, supervises and controls matters such as raising funds, hiring key personnel, and arranging for distributors. The producer is involved throughout all phases of the filmmaking process from inception to completion of a project.

6. Color theory

In the arts of painting, and photography, color theory is a set of basic rules for mixing color to achieve a desired result. Mixing colors of light, usually Red/Green/Blue, is done using the additive color system (also referred to as the "RGB Model" or "RGB color space"). The basis for these colors is the color-sensitive cone cells in the human retina. All the possible colors that can be created by mixing these three colored lights are referred to as the gamut of those particular lights. All these colors when mixed together in equal portions create white; when no color of light is present, one perceives black. Additive color applies to computer monitors, television, and video projectors, all of which use combinations of red, green, and blue phosphors

7. Color Correction

Color Correction by using Color Gels, is a process used in Stage Lighting, Photography, Television, Cinematography to name a few disciplines, the intention of which is to alter the overall quality of the light, measured on a scale known as Color Temperature. Every light source has a related Color Temperature that at it's basic level describes how White the color of the light is.

Color Temperature is measured in degrees Kelvin ($^{\circ}\text{K}$), and the higher the value, the closer to the Blue end of the spectrum the color is. For instance, a standard household light bulb has a color temperature of about 3000°K , looking rather yellow. On the other hand, a bright sunny day may give a reading of about 5600°K , appearing much more bluer than the light bulb.

Color correction therefore creates the possibility of making one light source appear to have the Color Temperature of another. This is very important in photography for instance; Let us assume that a photographer wishes to capture an object on a sunny and bright day, but needs to add some artificial light to the subject to create the desired image. If he were to use a standard Tungsten-Halogen source the artificial light would appear very yellow compared to the rest of the available light. The answer would be to 'Color Correct' the light source by placing a light-bluish gel over it to raise its Color Temperature.

For the projects case we did this in postproduction by adjusting the RGB values, contrast, hues, and saturation.

8. Sound Editing

A sound editor is a creative professional responsible for selecting and assembling sound recordings in preparation for the final sound mixing or mastering of a television program or motion picture. Sound editing developed out of the need to fix the incomplete, un-dramatic, or technically inferior sound recordings of early talkies, and over the decades has become a respected filmmaking craft, with sound editors implementing the aesthetic goals of motion picture sound design.

9. Typography

Typography is the art and technique of selecting and arranging type styles, point sizes, line lengths, line leading, character spacing, and word spacing for typeset applications. These applications can be physical or digital. The two primary functions of typography are the presentation of text in a manner that is not only easy to read but also visually engaging. The latter function of typography may be expressed in two ways: through color and the atmosphere or feel of the printed material. Other typographic issues that a typographer involved with the traditional printing press might be interested in are: paper selection, ink choice, and the printing method. Typography is the art performed by typographers.

10. DVD Authoring

DVD authoring describes the process of creating a DVD video that can be played on a DVD player. DVD authoring software must conform to the specifications set by the DVD Forum group in 1995. The specifications are complicated due to the number of companies that were involved in creating them.

End user requirements:

Display device

A DVD player

PG 13 (viewer discretion advised, strong language)

Cast and Crew:

Ali Fawaz	as Office Mo Black
Samir Demnati	as Sam
Shannon Couston	as Iris
Andrea Fisher	as Angela
Anna Troy	as the Monster

Advisors:

Chris Jackson	chief advisor
James Ver Hague	advisor
Nancy Ciolek	advisor

Sanjiv Solanki	consultant
Inderjeet Sehmi	consultant

Professors at USC

Jeanne Pierre	Beginning Filmmaking
Steve Abrezzi	Beginning Filmmaking
Michelle	Digital Editing with AVID
Austin Formato	Commercial Production

Department Head

Marla Schweppe

Script:

CHARACTERS

Shannon - Iris

Pant Shoes Jacket

Sam - Sam

Jeans, Shoes, Sweatshirt

Andrea - Angela

Top and Pants

Anna Black Widow

A variety of nightgowns. One scary one and one sexy one. Make up for the eyes. Hair pulled over face.

Could you bring three photographs of just Anna. She should be the only one in the shot. If not any pics of her will do.

Ali - Mo Black

Cop costume

Scene 1:

Voice over MO

"To let all that has been done go. I wished. I would never be able to leave all that I have done behind. It is what it is now, it must be done. For her sake. "

Mo steps out of the car, with a gloomy look on his face. He gathers himself as the door slams shut. She hastily paces down the hall. He

Outsides always coming in to town, they never take the warning seriously. The more people know the more attention Webster town gets. We cant be in the spotlight. They would take her away.

He knocks on the door. Pauses, the nervousness overwhelming him. He knocks again. Iris opens the door. He is still involved in the conversation in the background. He is startled to see a cop.

MO

"Excuse me, I was wondering if it was possible for me to have a word with you. There have been some strange occurrences, and I wanted to warn the residents. Do you have some time?"

He nosily peers in as Iris blocks his view in the doorway. Iris is bewildered by the cops' presence.

MENU: LISTEN: Scene 2a

MO

"Um, Sure thing officer. "

He steps aside and makes way for the officer. He walks in and takes off his hat.

MO

"I wont be very long, just out on the rounds doing my job. Ha ha.." (creepy fake laugh)

Everyone gathers around bewildered and holds their positions in a tense manner. They chuckle with fear as the officer takes out a bunch of pictures from his coat and hands them out.

MO

"This is why I'm here. He says
This girl in the pic has gone missing. Poor girl.
She is missing. Have you folk seen her?"

IRIS

"No officer, pretty girl, but we haven't seen her."

ANGELA

"Yeah,"

SAM

"Me neither."

MO

"Strange, she was last spotted around here. He looks around. Ha Ha, Well, ill
leave these pics here. Something might cross your mind. You give me a call.
Here is my card."

He walks over to the door.

"Alright, you kids have a good night. Thanks for your time."

MENU: BRUSH OFF Scene 2b

IRIS

"Well, this isn't a good time officer. Everyone is just about
tucked in."

MO

"Oh in that case, I will keep this brief. I just wanted to inform you
that this girl is gone missing. "

He hands iris the pics and the card.

"You folks let me know if you know anything or hear anything."

IRIS

"Ok officer, we'll do that."

MO

"Damn city folk"(he whispers under his breath).

Scene 3:

IRIS

"Whoa, that was really weird."

ANGELA

"Yeah,"

IRIS

"He didn't strike me as a cop. You know.
He was creepy, and look at these pictures."

SAM

"People gone missing, something you not telling us about your grandparents summer home. Ha ha"

IRIS

"Shut up man, that's really strange that people have been disappearing."

Iris reaches for the image.

"Wow she looks so much like Roxanne."

SAM

"Oh don't go thinking about that again, you will think yourself into a rut. Forget her. Tomorrow well be back in the city and have all the bars and parties and women you want."

ANGELA

"Oh shut up Sam, Its good to know that you think that way. I feel real secure."

SAM

"Ha ha.. Oh come on girl, you know I'm just joking, giving my boy a man talk."

Iris continues to stare at the pics as Sam and Angela get close. He looks over at them and gasps.

IRIS

"Ok lovebirds, I'm gonna call it a night, we have an early start tomorrow."

ANGELA

"Gnite Iris."

SAM

"Don't go tripping about that photo man."

MENU: Choose who you go to bed as.

Iris: Scene 4a

IRIS

"Huh,"

His eyes open he starts to move. He groans. He gets up in shock.

"Where am I"?

He looks around. It is cold. From the hallway emerges a gorgeous but mysterious woman. She stands in the doorway.

"Roxanne."

A sinister sexy laugh echoes.
She comes up to him.

WIDOW

"Don't be afraid"

She starts to caress and cradle him. She starts to take off his clothes and seduce him. He knows what he is doing is wrong but can't control the mesmerizing touch of the woman.

Menu: Stay & Play

He thinks: This is evil, no control over myself

WIDOW

"Don't worry baby, I will soon make everything alright,"

She starts to strip him. He tries to hold on but she gets rough. Confused in her aggression he begins to make way for the door.

"Wait baby, what's the matter, don't you want me?"

IRIS

"Um.. I do... but.. He looks away for a moment"

She leaps at him, grabs his throat and drags him into the closet. His struggle is no use. His vision fades.

WAKE.

Menu: Run

She is on top of him kissing and caressing him.

IRIS

"No, No, Wait"

He pushes her off and looks at the door. He gathers himself making his way to the door. He races past the bathroom and finds the staircase. One last glance back and the widow pushes him down the stairs. He hits the cold floor. She has him. Everything fades to black.

WAKE

Sam: Scene 4c

He awakens outside. He doesn't know where he is and he looks around. He is confused and afraid. The cold wind blows through him. He sees a light in the distance. Should he muster the courage to venture there?

Call cops: Scene 5a

He looks around his pockets for his cell phone as he looks around for shelter. It's ringing. Is he being watched. He looks around.

SAM

"Hello, Help me,
I'm stuck outside, all these broken houses."

OPERATOR

"Calm down sir, We need to know where you are. Can you tell us where you are"

He cries on the other end.

SAM

"Help me please, mam, send someone."

OPERATOR

"Sir we need to know where you are. Can you tell us the street name. A sign."

He ventures out , not too far. Runs back to his shelter.

SAM

"No mam, I'm scared, and there are abandoned houses, a construction sight.. Hello...
Fucking batteries."

He begins to cry.

WAKE

Scene 5c: Look for Angela

Angela, He looks into the house. He hears he voice echoing in the background.

SAM

"Angela.
Angela, you there."

He traces her voice up the stairs to a bathroom filled with bodies of men.

ANGELA

"Sam,"

SAM

"Oh my god Angela, What the hell is going on, What are you doing here."

ANGELA

"Oh baby, look at this stuff."

She shows him the bathroom full of bodies. He looks over perplexed.

SAM

"What...
What the fuck. How long have you been here."

ANGELA

"About 5 min now."

SAM

"And you didn't think of getting the fuck out of here."

ANGELA

"Baby look, These guys are still kind of alive and look at their faces."

SAM

"Whoa,"

ANGELA

"Lets go into the room."

SAM

"Ur nuts, lets just get the fuck out of here and call someone. We don't need to dig into this shit."

He follows her into the bedroom.

ANGELA

"Wow look at all this."

SAM

"Damn, what are those..."

ANGELA

"Masks, just like the one on the bodies. But, why masks and dolls and all these people?"

SAM

"This is some twisted shit."

He ventures over and grabs the masks. The both explore the environment.

"What kind of killer puts a mask on their victims. What is the meaning behind it."

There is a mild stomping and the widow enters behind them. Sam turns around. There are two thump sounds and the they both go down. Angela struggles to drag herself away. She is almost at the door. Sam crawls as well. A flashlight lights the hallway. Someone is here. The officer appears undisturbed by the incident.

MENU: Ask for help

SAM

"Officer, Sir, Help. Save her"

Officer Black steps over Angela. She hangs on to his foot and he shakes her off. He walks over to Sam.

MO

"Oh, boy, Poor fellow. Its not easy. He looks at the Widow.
So you have been busy while I have been gone. Ha ha ha."

He looks at Sam and knocks him out.

END

MENU: Wait

Sam lays still and watches as Angela crawls. The officer enters flashing his flashlight. He steps over Angela.

MO

"Ha ha. You have been a busy little girl haven't you. Well look, here are all these people to play with. You don't need to go anywhere. All your friends you keep here with you. Now are you going to introduce me to your new friends."

He cradles the monster in his arms
He shies away in an evil way and walks into the corner and sits down.

SAM

"You fucking bastard, its you. You came to warn us."

MO

"Oh seems like you didn't finish the job, cant get too sloppy.
They cant play like this."

He walks over to Sam and kicks him till he is dead. The widow crawls over to him as his vision fades.

END

Scene 5b: Look for Iris:

SAM

"Iris, You ok man...
Hello"

He makes his way up the stairs awaiting a response from Iris. No answer. He comes up the hall and walks into a room.

"Holy fucking shit, no"

He sees a beautiful woman with her hair pulled back scared in the corner. He walks towards her.

"Are you okay."

She looks at him.

WIDOW

"Yesss, but.."

She looks in the closet
His glance falls in the closet and he realizes.
Iris, he runs to his friends assistance.

SAM

"What the hell is going on here. What happened here."

He takes a few steps back.

WIDOW

"Baby, hold me, please, I am so scared, I don't know. Hold me,"

She reaches out to touch him

MENU: Play

He stares and gets mesmerizes in her eyes. That is all that matters now. He giver her his hand.

WIDOW

"Hold me, Hold me,"

Her voice echoes in his head. She gets him close and they begin to caress each other.

SAM

"Oh no, no, I cant I mean, but wow, you are incredible
How did you get here."

WIDOW

"Ask questions later, there is so much time."

She starts to take off his clothes. Sam is heated and is ready to have fun when Angela runs in the room

ANGELA

"Sam, What the fuck."

He gains his consciousness. The widows spell is broken. She turns and hisses at Angela, which gives Sam enough time to make his way to the door.

SAM

"Run , Angela Run"

They both dart out the door, down the stairs.

MENU: Run Out

SAM

"No, No, it cant be, What have you done to Iris"

She walks creepily towards him,

WIDOW

"Hold me, Hold me,"

He takes one last glance at Shannon,

SAM

"You monster,"

He runs out the door and down the stairs. As he is exiting the apartment he runs into Angela.

"Run Angela, Run.."

MENU merge: Run to the street *

Angela and Sam race past the empty houses. They find the street and look around.

Scene 4b: Angela

ANGELA

"Where am I , What,
Sam, SAM,
Shannon. Who,"

She gathers herself and gets off the floor. She wonders who these people are sprawled across the floor. She realizes that there is blood.

"Oh my god."

She pushes the bodies to see if they are alive. She is up on her feet and looking at the door and the bodies.

MENU: Scene 6a: Investigate

ANGELA

"What is all this, where am I, Where is everyone.
Who are these people."

She walks closely and looks at the bodies. Notices their faces.

"Tribal Masks, Am I dreaming, This cant be real. Who does this."

She takes the masks off the faces and hears something.

"Huh.."

The wind rustles and she steps out into the hallway. The widow has noticed her presence. Tucking Iris away in the closet she runs to the door. She arrives to notice Angela investigating. Startled by the arrival of the widow, Angela is frozen still.. The widow enters the room and is followed by the cop. He storms in.

MENU: Widow

Both the cop and her are frozen still. She makes the first move, she reaches towards the widow. An evil glance followed by a loud hiss is what the widow responds with. She still paces towards the angry woman.

ANGELA

"I don't want to hurt you..."

She touches the widow and falls victim to the widows wrath. She scratches and bites at Angela. Officer Black intervenes.

MO

"Get off, No"

He struggles at the widow and prys her off Angela. She turns on the officer and he is pinned to the floor. Angela darts out of the room. She runs out of the building and sees the officer pinned to the glass in the widows clutches. She notices the car in the corner and runs to it.

Menu: Wait for Cop

She gets into the car. She gets into the back seat and keeps staring out when she notices Sam there.

ANGELA

"Sam, Sam baby"

He looks up to her and is ecstatic to see Angela.

SAM

"Angela, baby,
Are you ok,"

ANGELA
"Yeah, You"

SAM
"What is going on here,"

ANGELA
"I don't know,"

SAM
"I knew this vacation in the farm was a bad idea. Look how things turned out."

ANGELA
"She has him, We need to wait. I don't know if he is coming back."

SAM
"What, what do you mean, he's a cop, he's got guns and things"

ANGELA
"He's not coming back."

SAM
"Oh shit, looks someone's there."

They notice Iris staggering to the car. He gets there. They roll down their window and unlock the doors.

SAM
"Iris. You, Are you okay?"

IRIS
"We need to go. She has him"

ANGELA
"Get in, get in"

He gets in and they peel out.
What the fuck is going on here.
They look back and see the widow walking out and waiting on the roadside.

END

Menu: Leave the cop

She runs into the car and jumps into the driver seat. She struggles around but the keys are in the car

ANGELA
"Sam, Sam"

SAM
"Angela baby,"

ANGELA

"No time now Sam, She's got him, we gotta get out"

SAM

"Got who, the officer"

ANGELA

"The girl , thing, She's got him"

She starts up the engine and it roars to a start. She peels out of the curb and drives past these abandoned houses.

SAM

"What is this place."

ANGELA

"Whatever it is we are going far, far away from here."

She drives off as both sit down in silence. The widow is in the rear view, smiling.

END

MENU: Cop

She runs to the cop as the cop fires a few rounds and they both race down the stairs and out.

MO

"You keep running up ahead and meet your buddy Sam. I'm gonna pull the car up."

ANGELA

"No officer don't leave me.
Trust me, everything will be alright, now run."

She races down and meets Sam.

SAM

"Angela, Angela, you ok"

ANGELA

"Sam, we got to go, where is he."

SAM

"What?"

ANGELA

"She's on the loose, we got to go."

SAM

"Baby, I don't understand"

Scene: the cop arrives for pickup

The cop car pulls up.

MO

"Come on guys quick."

They both waste no time in jumping in. The cop puts the car into gear and drives off. They look back at the abandoned town.

SAM

"Wait officer, Iris"

MO

"What, who, we cant go back its ridiculous."

ANGELA

"No we have to."

SAM

"Yeah, we cant leave them out there, those are our friends."

MO

"Are you guys for real? You cant be kidding me."

He slams on the breaks. You see the abandoned houses in the distance and the car waiting

MENU: Return for Shannon

The cop turns the car around and parks it near the townhouse. He looks at the kids with an angry look

MO

"This better be worth it."

The furious driving alarms the kids. The door is slammed shut and he enters the room. They wait, wait, and wait. They hear screams of the cop.

Angela jumps into the driver seat and reaches for the keys.

ANGELA

"Fuck he has the keys."

They look at the door and there stands the widow. They scream as she comes to the window with the keys in her hand.

END

MENU: Leave

MO

"There was no way I was making you guys make me go back there. With all the things I've been seeing the past few days, I just want to get out..."

"What was that anyway? Weird..."

No one understand, people come and go, that's life in Webster. As long as we are safe for now... we will come back with more people. Pray your friend makes it."

END

Scene 6b:Run outside:

ANGELA

"What was all that, I cant believe it, That's not real."

She walks into the empty lot. There in front of hey lay her three choices. She wonders. What should she do?

MENU: Save Sam

She sees Sam in the distance and runs towards him. Her heart beats. She gets closer to him. She is relieve to see it is him, but she is still stuck in fear.

ANGELA

"Sam, Baby, Sam"

He grabs her,

SAM

"Oh baby, Angela, you ok."

ANGELA

"Sam I'm scared I don't know what to do."

SAM

"Me too baby, Shh.. You hear that."

ANGELA

"What"

SAM

"Quiet"

ANGELA

"Shit did you see that, What baby."

Their senses continue to play tricks on them and the wait crouched in the corner. The widow starts to walk towards them. They hear a car. The cop car pulls in

Go to menu * Cop pickup

MENU go to Cops

She runs towards the street. She sees Sam.

ANGELA

"Sam, Sam. Are you Ok?"

He shivers in the corner. She looks around for help and spots a car driving by. She waves for assistance and makes her way towards Sam.

"Sam get up, Lets go"

SAM

"I cant, No..." (he shivers)

She grabs him

ANGELA

"Baby come on."

He just sakes

SAM

"No, I cant, Were going to die"

She slaps him.

ANGELA

"Gather yourself. Come on. Come on honey we are going to make this."

He gets up slowly as the cop car pulls in closer.

Go to menu * Cop pickup

MENU: Save Iris

ANGELA

"Iris... Iris"

She runs up the stairs. Her fears overwhelm her.

"Iris. Hey, No messing around man, enough with the scares."

She walks past the bathroom. Nothing in there, she makes her way into the room. The room is empty but there is blood on the floor. She walks towards the window. She glances out to see if anyone is outside. She kneels to feel the blood and glances in the closet. Her heart start racing she is frozen what should she do?

MENU: Get help

ANGELA

"Help, Help,"

She screams and grabs her hair. No one comes. She wanders around the room and to the window. No one there. She runs to the stairs.

"Help, Someone there? Help?"

She comes back to the room.

MENU: Save him

ANGELA

"Iris, oh no...
Wake up, are you ok...
I got to get you out of here."

She grabs him and starts to drag him. She cries as she does this.

"Come on wake up."

She has him at the stairway.

"Don't make me do this."

She pushes him down the stairs and notices the cops step in. She races down with the body and the cop is face to face with her. He stands behind Iris and takes Angela's place in the stairway.

MO

"Well, well, what do we have here."

He has a sinister look in his face.

Menu: Ask for help

ANGELA

"Officer, Sir, Um, He is my friend, I found him here. I I"

MO

"Oh don't worry. Its ok.. Ha ha.."

She glances to notice the widow creep in the room. As soon as she glances back at the cop he knocks her out with the butt of his gun. She lies faded. She sees the widow and the officer embrace as her vision fades.

Menu: Run out

She races out the door. The officer tries to grab her.

MO

"Hey wait, Hey...
I just want to talk to you."

She runs out the house and races towards his parked car. She keeps running and notices that she is being chased. She opens the driver side door and jumps into the seat.

SAM

"What, Angela, What are you doing?"

Sam is startled by her entry and she scurries to get the keys started. Her heart races and she cranks the engine on. Officer Black comes and punches at the window. They all scream in fear and the car pulls away.

SAM

"Oh no baby, What's going on."

He holds her.

"Its ok baby, its ok"

There is a moment of silence and then she starts to cry.

"Its over baby. Its over. Relax."

She holds his hand tight and they drive away.

END SCRIPT

